

1-14-1863

Thomas L. Evans letter to his parents from on board the Hiawatha a few miles above Vicksburg, January 4, 1863

Thomas L. Evans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.ewu.edu/tlevans>

Recommended Citation

Evans, Thomas L., "Thomas L. Evans letter to his parents from on board the Hiawatha a few miles above Vicksburg, January 4, 1863" (1863). *Thomas L. Evans Civil War Correspondence and Diary*. 35.
<https://dc.ewu.edu/tlevans/35>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Thomas L. Evans Civil War Correspondence and Diary by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jotto@ewu.edu.

On board the Hiawatha
on the Miss. River a few miles
above Vicksburg Jan. 4th 1863

Dear Parents

I wrote a few
lines yesterday, which I believe
has not gone North yet. To say
I must write a short history
of our demonstration on Vicksburg.
On the 27th we went down as
far as the mouth of the
Gazoo River & a few miles
up it until we were about
12 miles from the city.

At dark we landed and took
up our march almost south
at the end of three miles
the road entered a dense forest
we continued our march by the
bright moonlight until one
o'clock when we stacked our

arms and lay down to sleep until morning. but it was so chilly we could not sleep much so we built fires and sat by them until morning. At five O'clock crack crack went the canon not more than a mile off which indicated that Morgan L. Smith's division was engaging the enemy in front and on our left. At Sun up volley after volley of musketry broke like a death knell upon our ears. But it kept moving farther and farther away which showed we were driving them & in three hours they were so far away we could hear nothing but the canon again. During this time reports were coming that we were driving them

72-6

3-8

rapidly one or two soldiers with slight wound in their hands & arms and bullet holes through their clothes came by & were besieged with a thousand questions & we ascertained that ^(our Division) F. M. L. Smith was wounded. At noon we were move to the extreme right where we rested in plain view of the rebel batteries & on the hill in front.

Our batteries were now got in position not more than fifty yds. in front of us while off to our left musketry fighting was still going on and we knew not what moment we would be called upon to assist. while the battery before us was constantly roaring the enemies shell frequently went whizzing over our heads & sometimes lighting in

crop over & drive them out.

Tuesday the position of our Reg. was changed. The right wing was thrown forward as pickets along the enemies lines while the left wing (in which our Com. is) fell back some fifty paces to a ravine to protect it from the enemies shell. But there was no fighting that day except among the pickets. but the day was spent in building breastworks for the protection of our batteries. Next (Wednesday) morning we were relieved from picket & fatigue duty & moved about a mile in the rear here we had a chance to build good fires to cook &

45 dry our clothes for it had
rained all night Monday night,
Wednesday & New Years day.
we kept that position while
all was quiet in front except
great preparations for a battle
on both sides. The rebels were
heavily reinforced & had a
great deal of artillery while
our men had planted some
30 or 40 guns some of them
30 pounders ready to sweep
the hill & entrenchments
before them such was the
position of the two armies
on New Years night. All was
quiet & the 96th fast asleep in
their comfortable beds they had
prepared of brush & leaves
when at 9 o'clock it was whispered
quietly in our ears to get ready
to march without the least
noise. By one o'clock we were
again on board the Hrawatha

& by next morning not a man
or a gun or a valuable thing
was left in all that woods
& by ^{next day} noon every boat was
loaded & we were steaming down
the Yazoo having accomplished
nothing by all our labor.

I think it though a wise
& successful retreat for we
were too weak without Grant's
assistance & where he is I
don't know. The loss on
on either side I don't know
The 16th Ohio was principally
killed or captured mostly
captured Lieut. Harvey Woods
is said to have fallen
while cheering his men forward.
The 48th & 54th Ohio 6th Mo.
& 25th Iowa are said to have lost
considerably other Reg. engaged
I don't know.

8 The five days we spent in the swamp has made a great many of our men sick.

Ferry Perry & Tom Wheeler have the Measels. Sils Johnson has the jaundice is getting better. Wilson Blue & S. Moor & Aq. Turner & T. Sterling are not well but I think two or three days fine weather will fix them up. Levi Hill & John Elliot are pretty sick I don't know what to think of them. David Croy. has the typhoid fever but is doing well quite a number of others who you do not know are also complaining but improving.

I never saw such a discouraged set of men in my life. Officers and men say we may as well give up. There is no use trying any longer. That the union can't be preserved. But I am not so much discouraged & think ten days nice weather and reasonably good times will change the thing again.

On board the Hiawathe, on the Miss.
River a few miles above Vicksburg.

Jan. 4th, 1863.

Dear Parents:

I wrote a few lines yesterday which I believe has not gone North yet. To-day I must write a short history of our demonstration on Vicksburg on the 27th. We went down as far as the mouth of the Yazoo River and a few miles up it until we were about 12 miles from the city.

At dark we landed and took up our march almost South. At the end of three miles the road ended a dense forrest. We continued our march until one o'clock when we stacked our arms and lay down to sleep until morning, but it was so ghilly we could not sleep much and built fires and sat by them until morning.

At five o'clock, crack, crack went the cannon not more than a mile off which indicated that Morgan, L. Smith's Division was engaging the enemy in front and on our left. At sun-up, volley after volley of musketry broke like a death knell upon our ears but it kept moving farther and farther away to show we were driving them and in three hours they were so far away we could hear nothing but the cannon again. During this time, reports were coming that we were driving them rapidly. One or two soldiers with slight wounds in their hands and arms and bullet holes through their clothes came by and were besieged with a thousand questions and we ascertained that Gen. M.L. Smith was wounded. At noon we (our division) were moved to the extreme right where we rested in plain view of the rebel batteries and breastworks on the hill in front.

Our batteries were now got in position not more than fifty yds. in front of us while off to our left musketry, fighting was still going on and we knew not what

#2.

we would be called upon to assist. While the battery before us was constantly soaring, the enemies shell frequently went whiz, whiz over our heads and sometimes lighting in our midst but fortunately wounding none and stunning but one or two of our Reg., though in the Reg. on our right, one man was struck in the head with a cannon ball. Thus we spent last Sabbath.

Next morning I went to the boat on some business for the Reg. but the Reg. retained the same position and the fight continued the same on Monday. On my return from the boat, I passed along in the rear of the battle from the extreme left around to the right where our Brigade rested. I could not see the battle though on account of the thick wood in which it was but I met ambulance after ambulance and wagon after wagon loaded with wounded and men on foot wounded and bloody returning from the battle and one man I saw going out with his left hand carefully bandaged. He said he got wounded the day before and was going to try them again. On Sunday, the rebels were driven back across the stream into their entrenchments. Monday we made a fruitless attempt to cross over and drive them out.

Tuesday, the position of our Reg. was changed. The right wing was thrown forward as pickets along the enemies lines while the left wing in which our Co. is, fell back some fifty paces to a ravine to protect it from the enemies shell. But there was no fighting that day except among the pickets but the day was spent in building breast-works for the protection of our batteries.

Next (Wednesday) morning we were relieved from picket and fatigue duty and moved about a mile to the rear. Here we had a chance to build good fires to cook and dry our clothes for it had rained all night Monday night.

Wednesday and New Years day we kept that position while all was quiet in front except great preparations for a battle on both sides. The rebels were heavily re-inforced and had a great deal of artillery while our men had planted some 30 or 40 guns some of them 30 pounders ready to sweep the hill and entrenchments before them. Such was the position of the two armies on New Year's Night. All was quiet and the 96th fast asleep in their comfortable beds they had prepared of brush and leaves when at 9 o'clock it was whispered quietly in our ears to get ready to march without the least noise. By one o'clock, we were again on board the Hiawatha and by next morning, not a man or a gun or a valuable thing was left in all that woods and by noon nextday, every boat was loaded and we were streaming down the Yazoo having accomplished nothing by all our labor.

I think it though, a wise and successful retreat for we were too weak without Grants assistance and where he is, I don't know. The loss on either side, I don't know. The 16th Ohio was principally killed or captured-mostly captured. Lieut. Harvey Woods is said to have fallen while cheering his men forward. The 48th and 54th Ohio, 6th Mo. and 25th Iowa are said to have lost considerably, other regiments engaged I don't know.

The five days we spent in the swamp has made a great many of our men sick. Jessy Perry and Tom Wheeler have the measles. Sile Johnson has the jaundice and is getting better. Wilson Blue and S. Moor and Aq. Turner and T. Sterling, are not well but I think two or three days fine weather will fix them up. Levi Hill's and John Elliot are pretty sick. I don't know what to think of them. David Croy has the typhoid fever but is doing well. Quite a number of others who you do not know, are complaining but improving.

#4.

I never saw such a discouraged set of men in my life. Officers and men say we may as well give up. There is not use trying any longer, that the Union wan't be preserved but I am not so much discouraged and think ten days nice weather and reasonably good times, will change the thing again.